

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00

SP-02 EB-04 L-01 TRSE-00 AF-04 /046 W

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R 071445Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5807

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 3149

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EGEN, GY

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH LAURENCE MANN, GUYANA'S AMBASSADOR
TO U.S.

1. AT MY REQUEST AMBASSADOR LAURENCE "BUNNY" MANN CAME TO LUNCH DEC. 5. THIS WAS THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY I HAD HAD TO SEE AND TALK WITH HIM SINCE THE CONCLUSION OF THE TODMAN VISIT ON NOV. 29.

2. MANN WHO IS BY NATURE EBULLIENT SEEMED SUBDUED AND DEPRESSED ON THIS OCCASION. HE BEGAN OUR CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT HE HAD TALKED TO SEVERAL ORDINARY GUYANESE CITIZENS (THE "MAN IN THE STREET") ABOUT THE TODMAN VISIT AND HAD RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING REACTION: THIS WAS THE THIRD VISIT BY A HIGH-LEVEL AMERICAN OFFICIAL IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS (UNDER SECRETARY HABIB HAD VISITED IN JUNE AND AMB. YOUNG IN AUGUST). EACH OF THESE VISITS HAD BEEN ATTENDED BY A LARGE AMOUNT OF PUBLICITY AND EACH VISITOR IN TURN HAD HAD NICE THINGS TO SAY ABOUT GUYANA, EVEN THE PROMISE OF FUTURE U.S. ASSISTANCE. SO FAR, DESPITE THE PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND PUBLICITY, THE MATERIAL BENEFIT TO GUYANA APPEARED TO BE MINIMAL.

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3. MANN, EMPHASIZING THAT THIS WAS THE REACTION OF NON-OFFICIAL GUYANESE AND DID NOT OF COURSE REPRESENT THE REACTION OF PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM, THE CABINET OR PARTY LEADERS, SAID THAT HE HAD RESPONDED TO SUCH COMMENTS BY POINTING OUT THAT LESS THAN A YEAR AGO THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USG AND GOG WAS VIRTUALLY AT ROCK BOTTOM, THUS IT WAS NAIVE TO THINK

THAT IN THE SPACE OF A RELATIVELY FEW MONTHS AND ON THE BASIS OF SOME HIGH-LEVEL VISITS THE RELATIONSHIP COULD BE RETURNED TO NORMAL.

4. I TOLD MANN THAT THE LINE HE HAD TAKEN SEEMED TO ME THE LOGICAL ONE. I THEN POINTED OUT THAT THE VISITS BY HABIB, YOUNG AND TODMAN WITHIN THE PAST SIX MONTHS REPRESENTED MORE HIGH-LEVEL USG ATTENTION THAN GUYANA HAD RECEIVED AT ANY TIME SINCE INDEPENDENCE. THERE WERE NOW THREE PEOPLE WITHIN THE USG AT THE POLICY LEVEL WHO HAD A FIRSTHAND ACQUAINTANCESHIP WITH GUYANA, WHO HAD VISITED THE COUNTRY, HAD SEEN ITS PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL AND HAD GONE AWAY WITH GENERALLY FAVORABLE IMPRESSIONS OF THE NATION'S LEADERSHIP AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THAT LEADERSHIP WAS TRYING TO DO. FURTHERMORE, I POINTED OUT THAT ONE SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE USG IS MOVING TO STEP UP ITS BILATERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM; WE HAVE ALSO INDICATED OUR INTENTION TO RESUME A PL480 PROGRAM WHICH THOUGH IN DOLLAR TERMS IT MIGHT BE LESS THAN GOG HOPED, NEVERTHELESS WAS A BEGINNING AND A SUBSTANTIAL BEGINNING AT THAT. MANN TOOK ALL THIS ON BOARD AND APPEARED TO AGREE WITH IT. HOWEVER, HIS DEPRESSED MOOD DID NOT IMMEDIATELY LIFT AND I SUSPECT THAT MANN IS BEING BLAMED PERSONALLY FOR THE SHORTFALL BETWEEN THE SIZE OF OUR PL480 PACKAGE AND THE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS DEPRIMIN REID HAD

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BROUGHT BACK WITH HIM FROM WASHINGTON REGARDING OUR ABILITY TO SUPPLY FOOD AID.

5. THE REST OF OUR LUNCHEON CONVERSATION COVERED A VARIETY OF TOPICS:

A) THE BUDGET SPEECH BY PRIMIN WILLIAMS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO:

-- MANN WAS OF THE OPINION THAT THE STATEMENT WILLIAMS HAD MADE IN REFERENCE TO THE FORTHCOMING WORLD BANK MEETING IN WASHINGTON (DEC. 14-15) IN HIS BUDGET SPEECH CLEARLY INDICATED THAT TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WOULD BOYCOTT THAT MEETING.

B) WHITE PAPER ON INVESTMENT:

-- MANN SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS MOVING FORWARD WITH A WHITE PAPER ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT WHICH IS NOW SCHEDULED FOR ISSUANCE SOMETIME IN JANUARY. HE HOPES THAT ONCE THIS PAPER IS PUBLIC FOREIGN INVESTORS WILL BEGIN AGAIN TO CONSIDER GUYANA SERIOUSLY AS A PLACE TO

INVEST.

C) BURNHAM'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON:

-- MANN REITERATED BURNHAM'S STRONG DESIRE FOR AN EARLY MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER IN WASHINGTON SHORTLY AFTER THE FIRST OF THE YEAR. HE SAID THE RUSSIANS ARE CONTINUING TO PRESSURE BURNHAM TO SET A DATE TO VISIT MOSCOW AND HAD STEPPED UP THEIR PRESSURE AFTER THE TODMAN VISIT TAKING THE LINE THAT "THEIR WAY OF DOING BUSINESS" WAS IN HIGH-LEVEL FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS IN MOSCOW. THEY ARE HINTING THAT IF SUCH MEETINGS GO WELL IMPORTANT RUSSIAN ASSISTANCE WILL BEGIN TO FLOW. BURNHAM STILL WANTS A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AT CONFIDENTIAL

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ALL COSTS TO PRECEDE ANY TRIP TO MOSCOW, ACCORDING TO MANN.

D) BURNHAM'S HEALTH:

-- TOWARD THE END OF OUR LUNCH MANN EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN THAT THE PRESSURES OF GOVERNMENT AND CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS IN WHICH GUYANA FINDS ITSELF APPEARED TO BE HAVING AN UNFAVORABLE EFFECT ON BURNHAM'S HEALTH. (MANN HAS SEEN BURNHAM SEVERAL TIMES SINCE RETURNING FROM WASHINGTON, AND, BEING AN OLD FRIEND, HAS OBVIOUSLY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE AND CONTRAST THE PRESENT STATE OF BURNHAM'S HEALTH WITH HIS CONDITION SEVERAL MONTHS AGO.) I ASKED IF HE FELT THAT BURNHAM'S HEALTH WAS INTERFERING WITH HIS ABILITY TO CARRY OUT THE DAY-TO-DAY GOVERNANCE OF THE COUNTRY. HE REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE BUT REPEATED HIS CONCERN THAT THE HEAVY PRESSURE OF BUSINESS WAS PLACING AN IMPORTANT STRAIN ON THE PRIME MINISTER.

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 3149

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6. COMMENT: MANN'S SUBDUED AND DEPRESSED STATE DURING THIS LUNCHEON WAS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS MEETINGS I HAVE HAD WITH HIM. I SUSPECT THAT IT WAS CAUSED BY A VARIETY OF FACTORS: (A) HE IS PROBABLY BEING PERSONALLY CRITICIZED BECAUSE MORE MATERIAL ASSISTANCE HAD NOT BEEN REALIZED FROM THE TODMAN VISIT; (B) HE HAS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE AT FIRSTHAND THE DIMENSIONS OF THE ECONOMIC PLIGHT FACING GUYANA (AT ONE POINT HE REMARKED GLOOMILY THAT ECONOMICALLY NEXT YEAR WOULD BE WORSE THAN THIS); (C) AN ECONOMIST BY TRAINING, HE IS ALSO FRUSTRATED BY THE INABILITY OF SO MANY GUYANESE OFFICIALS TO FACE UP REALISTICALLY TO THE HARD ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WITH WHICH THEY MUST COPE, AND HE REMARKED ON THEIR TENDENCY TO RETREAT INTO IDEOLOGICAL MUMBO-JUMBO RATHER THAN PROPOSE SENSIBLE ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS.

7. MANN WILL BE RETURNING TO WASHINGTON WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS AND WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE CONTACTING DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS SOON AFTER HIS RETURN. THE FOREGOING REPRESENTS HIS MOOD ON DEPARTURE FROM GEORGETOWN.

8. I HAVE YET TO DISCUSS THE TODMAN VISIT WITH THE FORMIN TO OBTAIN HIS IMPRESSIONS. THE DAY AFTER TODMAN'S DEPARTURE WILL LEFT FOR CARACAS FOR THREE DAYS OF
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DISCUSSIONS WITH THE VENEZUELANS. HE RETURNED ON SATURDAY (DEC. 3) ONLY TO DEPART THE NEXT MORNING ON AN UNANNOUNCED TRIP TO LUSAKA. HE IS DUE BACK IN GEORGETOWN ON DEC. 13.
BURKE

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